

The Fine Art of Stretching



Have you noticed these signs of stiffness? You move slower getting out of the car or bed. You ache when you bend over to tie your shoes. You can no longer sit cross-legged. If so, it's time to improve your flexibility.

Flexibility refers to how well your joints move through their range of motion. You can develop more joint flexibility by doing slow, gentle stretches held in a static position for several seconds to a minute. Stretching is not strenuous, but it requires focus and consistency.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends stretching at least 3 days a week. Stretch more often if you have lost some joint motion or have ongoing stiffness.

Primarily target stretches that aid your back, side, hip and leg muscles and follow these guidelines:

Warm-up: Stretch after warming up the muscles and joints for 5 to 10 minutes, or after your regular exercise.

Duration: Hold each stretch for at least 10 seconds, working up to 30 seconds.

Repetitions: Perform each stretch 3 to 5 times.

Technique: Stretch slowly and smoothly only to the point of mild sensation. Focus on the muscle being stretched; limit movement elsewhere and don't bounce.

The length of time you devote to a stretching workout will depend on your individual needs and the number of specific stretches you perform for each muscle.



These are basic guidelines. If you have back or joint problems, consult your health care provider before you begin an aggressive stretching routine. *Turn the page to learn about combination stretches.* ➤

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference." – Winston Churchill

4 Fun Ways to Exercise

If you have to drag yourself to exercise, here are some ways to raise the fun factor:

1 Find a good friend who will be committed to exercising with you. The buddy system is a proven way to keep exercisers motivated. Your exercise time together will pass quickly.



2 Machine workouts at home are convenient but often become tedious. Set up your machine in front of a DVD player and watch a TV series. You'll look forward to viewing the show's progress at your next workout.



3 Liven up your solo workouts with music. With a personal audio device you can download endless free podcasts, as well as audio books.



4 Vary your exercise routine by using new walking or jogging routes or using a mix of different cardio machines at the gym or at home.



While you may not always find exercise fun, it sure feels good when you're done.

And it's good for you!



March is Nutrition Month.



This month marks the 40th anniversary of National Nutrition Month. The No. 1 nutrition goal for everyone? Eat more fruits and vegetables. Keep them handy and add them to every snack and meal. Aim for 2 cups of fruits and 2½ cups of vegetables every day. Juice qualifies provided it's 100% vegetable or fruit, but whole foods are preferable.





Can stress affect your health? Yes – it can produce many adverse emotional, behavioral and physical symptoms.

The checklist below includes some of the major effects of stress.

- ☐ I become irritable, even angry, over minor incidents.
- ☐ I have trouble concentrating.
- ☐ I have trouble relaxing or sleeping.
- ☐ I lack energy and enthusiasm for favorite activities.
- ☐ I tend to either overeat or have little appetite.
- ☐ I neglect exercise and other healthful habits.
- ☐ I have more headaches, neck or back pain, or arthritis flare-ups.
- ☐ I have more colds or other infections.
- ☐ I have increased blood pressure, cholesterol and body fat.
- ☐ I have frequent digestive upsets (abdominal pain, constipation, irritable bowel episodes).

If you often experience even a few of these symptoms, try 2 things:

- 1. Identify what stresses you.** Spend a few minutes each day noting the situations or people who upset you. Awareness is the first step to controlling your reactions to stress and coping better.
- 2. Make sound nutrition and exercise daily priorities,** no matter what's going on in your life. The stronger you are physically, the less stress can impact your health.

Combination Stretches

Muscles that are most often tight are the lower back, hamstrings, hip flexors, calves and chest muscles. Here are 2 stretches that work multiple muscle groups.

For your SIDE, CHEST and OUTER HIP:

Lying on your back, bend one leg and cross it over the other leg. Keeping shoulders and head flat, try to touch the cross-over knee to the floor. Hold 10 to 15 seconds; then switch sides. Repeat both sides once or twice.

For your BACK and HAMSTRINGS:

From a position on your back with your rear and tailbone up against the wall, extend your legs up the wall (one at a time). The goal is to have both legs straight at the knee and a 90° bend at your hips in an "L" shape. You also can use this time to stretch your shoulders by extending your arms over your head.

Snoring: What's All the Noise About?

Snoring is annoying. We tend to dismiss it as simply a nuisance. But if your snoring gets louder and habitual, you could be at risk for health problems.

Snoring happens when the flow of air through your mouth and nose is blocked. The narrower your airway becomes, the greater the vibration and the louder the snoring. Basic causes:

- Relaxation of the throat muscles, resulting from deep sleep, alcohol or sedative use, or normal aging.
- Bulky throat tissue from excess weight.
- Physical abnormalities of the nose or throat.
- Inflammation of the nose and/or throat due to respiratory infections or allergies.

If you are a chronic, heavy snorer, you are at increased risk for apnea – brief cessation of breathing multiple times during sleep.

Apnea can strain your heart and reduce the quality of your sleep.

Consult your health care provider if you develop excessive daytime sleepiness or frequent headaches or fatigue upon waking.

To control mild or occasional snoring: Lose weight, sleep on your side and avoid sedating drugs such as sleeping pills or antihistamines. Also, get treatment for allergies.



Soothing Soup

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Whether it's a filling appetizer or a hearty meal, you can enjoy soup with healthful ingredients. Here are tips for making and buying soup:

Making soup is easy. Most soups start with liquid, vegetables and herbs. Adding legumes, chicken, meatballs, brown rice or whole-grain noodles turns soup into a meal. To reduce sodium, start with plain water instead of canned broth or bouillon.

Tip: Only 6% of our sodium intake comes from salt added during or after cooking, while 77% comes from packaged foods such as soup broth.

Soup shopping? Choose a variety labeled "no added salt," or look for soups with no more than 360 mg of sodium per cup (140 mg or less is considered low sodium). Note: The claim "sodium reduced" means the product has 25% less sodium than the original version. If the original had 1,000 mg of sodium per serving, the reformulated one still has 750 mg of sodium – that's pretty salty soup.

One soup caution: Restaurant and store-bought soups can have 750 to 1,000 mg of sodium per serving. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend you limit sodium to fewer than 2,300 mg a day. Lower that to 1,500 mg daily if you're: age 51 or older; if you have high blood pressure or other chronic conditions; or if you're African American.

For loads of flavor without adding salt to your cooking, experiment with herbs, citrus juices and vinegar. *Deliciously different!*



Smart moves toolkit is at www.personalbest.com/extras/Mar13tools.

Next Month: [What's Your Food Environment?](#)